



Active Community Supervision

What is Active Community Supervision? When an offender is released into the community, the professional probation officer (PO) becomes the most important contact point for the offender with the criminal justice system. To optimize successful outcomes for the offender, the PO should be trained to utilize the risk need assessment and match the offender with the treatment and programming that best addresses the offender's needs. This is what is meant by active community supervision.

The research shows that a community gets the best results and return on its investment by focusing treatment resources on the higher risk offenders (those most likely to re-offend). Lower risk offenders do not need the same level of treatment. In treatment, the offender's needs that are related to his/her criminal behavior must be targeted. Finally, treatment will be most effective if combined with cognitive behavioral therapy and tailored to the "learning style, motivation, abilities and strengths of the offender." James Bonta and D.A. Andrews, "Risk-Need-Responsivity Model for Offender Assessment & Rehabilitation," 2007-06, p. 1. It is very important that the PO establish a "collaborative and respectful working relationship with clients." Id.

What are Other City and Counties Doing? The Washington State Institute for Public Policy recently updated its assessment of evidence-based options that improve statewide criminal justice outcomes. It identified several models of community supervision and the monetary benefits and costs of each:

- Supervision with Risk Need and Responsivity Principles (high and moderate risk individuals) -the benefit to cost ratio was \$6.96 (for every \$1 invested, the community gets back \$6.96)
- Intensive Supervision with treatment - the benefit to cost ratio was \$1.93.
- Intensive Supervision (Surveillance Only) - known on the street as "tail 'em and nail 'em" - the benefit to cost ratio was (\$0.14)(negative \$0.14).

How Can Spokane City and County Improve? In 2011, David Bennett, a Spokane County Consultant determined that half of the high risk (of reoffending) and high need individuals in his study were misdemeanants, but only 26% of them were on supervision. It is important that these individuals be identified by a validated risk need assessment. Once identified, even though the charges are for misdemeanors, the individual should be placed on active supervision and appropriate treatment provided. See also, "Individualized Risk Need Assessment in a Comprehensive Pretrial Services Program."

Active community supervision will be needed to support most, if not all, of the alternatives to incarceration suggested by Smart Justice. In addition, the comprehensive

support services must be in place so that the professional probation officers have resources and programming to match with the offenders' needs. Treatment cost barriers for low-income offenders must be eliminated.

Personal Story: Offenders who have successfully completed treatment and become productive members of the community anecdotally report that how they were treated by their PO made a dramatic difference in their success. Being treated with respect and caring was important. The PO who did not assume that they would fail helped them reach their goals.

Sources of Information:

James Bonta and D.A. Andrews, "Risk-Need-Responsivity Model for Offender Assessment & Rehabilitation," 2007-06,

http://securitepubliquecanada.gc.ca/res/cor/rep/fl/Risk_Need_2007-06_e.pdf

Washington State Institute for Public Policy, "Return on Investment: Evidence-Based Options to Improve Statewide Outcomes April 2012 Update", 2012 April. Stephanie Lee, Steve Aos, Elizabeth Drake, Annie Pennucci, Marna Miller, Laurie Anderson. #12-04-1201.

<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/pub.asp?docid=12-04-1201>

David Bennett and Donna Lattin, "Spokane County Inmate Risk and Needs Study" (Power Point), March 2, 2011.

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